

NOTE ON THE GENUS *TERFEZIA* ; A TRUFFLE FROM THE
KALAHARI.

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(With Plate VII.)

South African truffles belonging to the genus *Terfezia* are well known. Marloth, in his 'Flora of South Africa,' vol. i, p. 26, gives an excellent illustration of one of these—viz. *Terfezia Claveryi*, Chatin, and mentions that—

"Two indigenous species of truffles belonging to the genus *Terfezia* are found in the Kalahari, occurring near shrubs of *Acacia hebeclada*, generally 3–4 inches below the surface of the ground. They are much esteemed as an article of diet when in season (March–June)." In a footnote on this subject Marloth further states: "*Terfezia Claveryi* and *T. Boudieri*, both known from North Africa and used there under the name 'terfaz.'"

As truffles belonging to the first-named species have recently been submitted to me by Dr. Peringuey, Director of the South African Museum, Cape Town, by Dr. Rogers, Director of the Geological Survey, and by G. C. Hunter, Esq., of Dunmurry, Floradale, Griqualand West, a few notes on the genus may not be out of place.

The genus *Terfezia* was created by Tulasne in 1846 as a result of an examination of specimens obtained from Algeria, and which had previously been referred to as *Oogaster algerius*, Corda, and *Tulasneinia leonis*, Zobel.

The genus at present comprises 28 species, and of these at least 11 occur on the African continent. Those recorded from South Africa are: *T. Claveryi*, Chat.; *T. Boudieri*, Chat., from the Kalahari and Windhuk; and *T. Pfeilii*, P. Henn., from Damaraland.

The genus *Terfezia* is readily distinguished from that of *Chæromyces* by possessing broadly ovate or globose asci. In *Chæromyces* the asci are distinctly elongated or lageniform, and arranged in rather simple parallel series. The gleba in *Terfezia* is clearly divided into *massula*, whereas in *Chæromyces* they are not conspicuous.

The plants of *Terfezia Claveryi*, Chat., which I have seen may be described as follows:

Ascomata of variable size and shape, subglobose or more frequently pyriform, shortly and broadly stipitate, 5–7 cm. by 6–9 cm. broad; cortex

yellowish-brown with yellowish cracks; gleba white-yellowish; asci subrotund, ovoid, shortly stipitate, 8-spored, $70-87 \times 65-75 \mu$; spores globose, yellowish, epispore very delicately alveolated, $17-23 \mu$ diam.

The plants are usually about the size and shape of an ordinary fig, as is seen in Plate VII, figs. 1 and 2. The average weight is 25-45 gm.

The specimen illustrated by the photograph in Fig. 4 is of exceptional size and more globose in shape; it measured 9 cm. across by 6 cm. deep, and weighed 226 grms. The characteristic shape of the ascus and spores are depicted in Figs. 5 and 6.

Mr. Hunter, in writing to me on the subject, mentioned that the natives found the truffles by observing the cracks in the ground, which, of course, are caused by the growth of these hypogaeal plants.

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII.

Illustrating structure of *Terfezia Claveryi*, Chat.

FIG.

- 1 and 2. Typical specimens. Natural size.
3. Specimen cut in half to show character of gleba. Natural size.
4. Large specimen of irregular shape. Slightly reduced.
- 5, *a* and *b*. Asci with 8 ascospores. $\times 600$.
- 6, *c* and *d*. Ascospores. $\times 1000$.